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Twenty Paragraphs about the World Conference on Faith and Order

By Ralph W. Brown

Published by the world-wide Continuation Committee representing the following Communions: Anglican, Armenian, Baptist, Congregational, Czechoslovak, Disciples, Eastern Orthodox, Friends, German Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian, Old Catholic, Presbyterian, Reformed, South India United

WH12
W78
RF
Pam 36

November 1, 1922

CAX 1

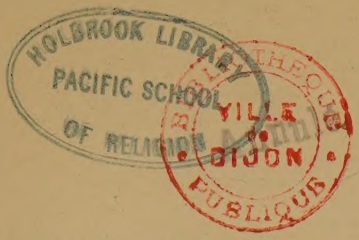
Volume édité « Faith & Order Commission
avec l'autorisation de la Direction des bibliothèques
de France

Dijon le 1er mars 1956

Le Conservateur

P. Gras

WH12
W78
RF
Pam 36
cage 1



We believe that the time has now arrived when representatives of the whole family of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, may be willing to come together for the consideration of questions of Faith and Order. We believe, further, that all Christian Communions are in accord with us in our desire to lay aside self-will, and to put on the mind which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We would heed this call of the Spirit of God in all lowliness, and with singleness of purpose. We would place ourselves by the side of our fellow Christians, looking not only on our own things, but also on the things of others, convinced that our one hope of mutual understanding is in taking personal counsel together in the spirit of love and forbearance. It is our conviction that such a Conference for the purpose of study and discussion, without power to legislate or to adopt resolutions, is the next step toward unity.

Twenty Paragraphs about the World Conference on Faith and Order

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1. Origin of the undertaking.

Moved by the growing desire on the part of all Christian people for the fulfilment of our Lord's prayer that all His disciples may be one, that the world may believe that God has sent Him, the General Convention of the American Episcopal Church in 1910 appointed a Commission to bring about a Conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and to ask all Christian Communions throughout the world which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour to unite in arranging for and conducting such a Conference.

2. Spread of the movement.

By correspondence and by deputations, the coöperation of nearly every Trinitarian Communion throughout the world has been secured.

3. Geneva, 1920.

Representatives of seventy-eight Churches in forty nations met August 12 to 20, 1920, in Geneva, Switzerland, where fundamental questions were discussed and world-wide committees appointed to prepare for further conferences.

4. Continuation Committee.

The Geneva meeting entrusted the conduct of the movement to a Continuation Committee, consisting of representatives of the various groups of Churches.

5. Washington, 1925.

The World Conference on Faith and Order will meet in Washington, the capital of the United States of America, on the first Monday of May, 1925. The President of the United States will deliver the address of welcome. The Continuation Committee will meet before 1925 to make the final arrangements, but vigorous, patient and persistent efforts must begin at once to make the Conference at Washington effective.

6. Subjects Committee.

A Subjects Committee, created by the Geneva meeting, is charged with promoting local discussions throughout the world of fundamental questions in preparation for the World Conference on Faith and Order.

7. Questions for preliminary discussion.

The following topics were discussed at the preliminary meeting in Geneva and proposed by that meeting for further study and discussion throughout the world: —

The Church and the nature of the reunited Church.
What is the place of the Bible and a creed in relation to reunion?

The first series proposed by the Subjects Committee was: —

1. *What degree of unity in Faith will be necessary in a reunited Church?*
2. *Is a statement of this one Faith in the form of a Creed necessary or desirable?*
3. *If so, what Creed should be used? or what other formulary would be desirable?*
4. *What are the proper uses of a Creed and of a Confession of Faith?*

The second series proposed by the Subjects Committee is: —

1. *What degree of unity in the matter of order will be necessary in a reunited Church?*
2. *Is it necessary that there should be a common Ministry universally recognized?*
3. *If so, of what orders or kinds of Ministers will this Ministry consist?*
4. *Will the reunited Church require as necessary any conditions precedent to ordination or any particular manner of ordination?*
5. *If so, what conditions precedent to ordination and what manner of ordination ought to be required?*

8. Discussion groups.

The Subjects Committee urges the formation of local groups, consisting of members of different Churches, for the study and discussion of these questions. No Church will be bound by the discussions or the findings. It is hoped that the Churches will be able to take action upon the reports of the World Conference itself. Reports of these preliminary local conferences will form a basis for the Conference at Washington, and should be sent to the General Secretary, Robert H. Gardiner, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A., from whom copies of the topics may be had in English, or if desired, in English, French, German and Greek.

9. Basis of the movement.

The invitation to participate in the World Conference on Faith and Order is addressed to all Churches throughout the world which accept the fact and doctrine of the Incarnation. Participation in the movement involves no surrender or compromise of any doctrine or position held by any Church.

10. The conference method.

The disagreements between the Churches are to be studied and discussed in conference, not controversially, but in an effort for mutual understanding and appreciation, in the hope that a way may thus be found to overcome them.

11. Proposals for Christian unity.

In the United States of America, Canada, England, Scotland, India, China, Australia, East Africa and other countries, efforts are in progress to unite two or more Churches within the same national boundaries, and on a wider scale much is being accomplished for closer unity among Christians of the same name in different countries and for the rapprochement of some of the larger communions with one another throughout the world. Information has been gathered for distribution concerning these local and partial movements, because of the light and encouragement which they afford to the more fundamental preparations for universal Christian reconciliation.

12. The Roman Catholic Church and the World Conference on Faith and Order.

While expressing cordial interest in the undertaking, as his predecessor Pope Pius X had done, Pope Benedict XV declared to the deputation which visited Rome in 1919 that as the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to the visible unity of the Church of Christ was well known to everybody, it would not be possible for the Roman Church to take part in such a Conference as the one proposed.

13. The nature of Christian unity.

The problem of unity requires for its effectual solution the concerted patient effort, under God's guidance, of all the Churches in conference. The promoters of the movement for a World Conference on Faith and Order therefore desire most earnestly that adhesion to the movement shall not appear to involve the acceptance or negation of any views, by whomsoever expressed, concerning the nature or the mode of unity. Such divergent views are subject-matter for the Conference; their study and comparison are its purpose.

14. Universal participation in the movement.

The requisite mutual understanding on the part of the Churches of one another's positions can be attained only as all the autonomous Communions throughout the world coöperate in the work of study and joint conference. It is earnestly hoped, therefore, that those Churches within the scope of the invitation which have hitherto remained aloof because of misunderstandings or local conditions, may soon find it possible to appoint coöperating Commissions.

15. The coöperating Commissions.

Because the deliberations are without binding force upon the Churches, and because a more rigid form of organization would be less effective, the method of representation of the Churches has been adapted freely to varying conditions. Each participating Church appoints a Commission or Committee of whatever numbers and under whatever terms it may desire, to coöperate in arranging for and conducting the World Conference. At the Geneva meeting, which was composed of members of Commissions and other representatives of participating or invited Churches, a world-wide Continuation Committee was appointed to carry on the work in conjunction with the coöperating Commissions, but these remain the indispensable agencies for furthering the movement in their respective Communions and localities.

16. Prayer.

The eight days ending with Pentecost (Whitsunday) of each year have been appointed by the Continuation Committee as a special period of prayer for the guidance of the efforts toward Christian reconciliation.

17. Finances.

Money is needed for publications, for postage, for the promotion of local conferences, for the travelling expenses of delegates and for the services of assistant secretaries and translators. The present requirement for these purposes is $50,000 a year. There has been a cordial world-wide response to the appeal for funds, but the gifts have almost all been small in amount. Very many more and larger gifts must be received from Churches and from individuals if the work is to go well. The American Episcopal Church has made an annual appropriation to enable its Commission to contribute substantially to the common fund of the Continuation Committee, and to organize for prompt and vigorous prosecution of the movement in its own Church. Several other Churches have taken similar necessary action, and it is earnestly hoped that the undertaking may receive wider and more adequate support from the participating Churches and their members.

18. How you can help the World Conference on Faith and Order.

There is need for your prayers that God will further the effort for Christian unity and prepare our hearts and minds for reconciliation. There is need for ardent patient effort on your part to promote study and discussion, in your neighborhood, of the fundamental questions concerning the faith and ministry of the reunited Church. There is need for your help in spreading knowledge of the movement, and particularly for the names and addresses of your friends, clerical or lay, men or women, who might be interested. There is need for you to read and think and pray about the World Conference on Faith and Order until you are not content to leave the matter to a few scattered persons who cannot bring so great a thing to pass unaided. It is your business, the concern of everyone who loves our Lord and the Church which is His Body, to take our divisions seriously to heart and unite in the effort to understand and overcome them.

19. Officers of the Continuation Committee.

The following were appointed by the preliminary meeting at Geneva:—*President*, the Rt. Rev. Charles H. Brent, D.D., Bishop of Western New York; *General Secretary*, Robert H. Gardiner, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A.; *Treasurer*, George Zabriskie, D. C. L., 49 Wall Street, New York City. Gifts may be sent to the United States Trust Company, 45 Wall Street, New York City, marked for the World Conference on Faith and Order. In Great Britain, remittances may be made to Rev. Ernest Jauncey, M. A., Brotherton Vicarage, Ferrybridge, Yorks, England, and in Australia to Rev. George Hall, Methodist Parsonage, Brighton, South Australia.

20. Publications.

The following publications, issued during the period of invitation by the Commission of the American Episcopal Church, and subsequent publications about the movement, may be had without charge from the General Secretary, Robert H. Gardiner, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A.

No. 14 *An Official Statement by the Joint Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A.* 1912.

No. 15. *Prayer and Unity*, by a Layman. 1913.

No. 18. *Unity or Union: which?* by the Rt. Rev. P. M. Rhinelander, D.D. 1913.

No. 19. *The Conference Spirit*, by a Layman. 1913.

No. 20. *The Manifestation of Unity*, by the Rt. Rev. C. P. Anderson, D.D. 1913.

No. 21. *List of Commissions already appointed.* The current edition contains lists of the members of the Continuation Committee and the Subjects Committee, as well as the Commissions of the several participating Churches.

No. 24. *A First Preliminary Conference* (Hotel Astor, New York, 1913).

No. 25. *Report of the Committee on Church Unity of the National Council of Congregational Churches.* 1913.

No. 26. *A World Movement for Christian Unity.* by Rev. Lefferd M. A. Haughwout. 1914.

No. 27. *Second Meeting of the Advisory Committee. Report of the Second Deputation to Great Britain. The Call for a Truce of God.* 1914.

No. 28. *The Object and Method of Conference.* 1915.

No. 29. *A Manual of Prayer for Unity.* 1915. 38 pages. Single copies free. More, five cents each. Three of the prayers, conveniently printed on a card, may be had free.

Suggestions for the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. Begining in 1919, new Suggestions have been printed from year to year.

No. 31. *Report of the Joint Commission to the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1916.

Epistolae nomine Ssmi Domini Benedicti XV humaniter missae ab eminentissimo viro Petro Gasparri, C.S.R.E., coetui virorum delectorum ad Congressum orbis christiani parandum ut favente Deo controversiae de fide et constitutione Ecclesiae Christi rite dilucidentur atque explorentur. 1917.

De Unione Ecclesiarum. 1917. Contains appended a list of articles about the World Conference movement in French, Italian, German, Greek, Russian and other periodicals. Reprints of such articles are often available for free distribution by the Secretary.

No. 32. *Report of the Deputation to Europe and the East. Rapport de la Mission envoyée en Europe et dans l'Orient. Rapporto della Delegazione mandata in Europa e nell'Oriente.* 1919.

Une nouvelle tentative pour préparer la réunion des Églises. Ein neuer Versuch die Wiedervereinigung der Christenheit herbeizuführen. Νέα ἀπόπειρα πρὸς προπαρασκευὴν τῆς ἑνώσεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ. 1920.

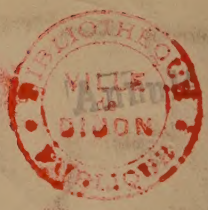
The following publications have been issued by or for the Continuation Committee, and may be had free on application to the Secretary:—

No. 33. *Report of the Preliminary Meeting at Geneva, Switzerland, August 12-20, 1920. A Pilgrimage toward Unity.*

No. 34. *A Compilation of Proposals for Christian Unity.* 1921. Contains the Appeal to all Christian People from the Bishops assembled in the Lambeth Conference of 1920, and other material referred to in Par. 11 above.

No. 35. *Hopeful Conferences in England and Australia.* 1922. Contains appended a list of some of the more recent books on Reunion.

Question-sheets issued by the Subjects Committee for use in local discussion groups may be had free from the Secretary in English, French, German and Greek, or in English alone. The Secretary is prepared to furnish in many instances a list of persons who might form a nucleus for such a group.

A simple request for publications about the World Conference will bring to any address, free of charge, the most recent and important of the pamphlets, and further publications to be issued at irregular intervals. Kindly address Robert H. Gardiner, General Secretary, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A.

Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas. — S. Augustinus, P. L., t. XLII, col. 176.